



X's & O's Educational Child Care A Young Star Shining Star Program

"The center is very "homey" and "cozy" and the children in her care are all very happy to be there. The center provides the children and families that it serves with a very rich program for the children. There are plenty of opportunities for children to explore, investigate, navigate, and learn throughout the day. Xochitl is always seeking out every opportunity to improve the quality of her program. She herself is continually progressing on her educational path and is pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood. She is continually striving to make her program better in whatever ways that she can. She truly exemplifies the YoungStar image that we are trying to promote. I always enjoy visiting the center and talking with Xochitl and the children. It truly is a great place for children to be."

**--Pam Kaye, YoungStar Technical Consultant
4C-For Children, Milwaukee**

The following is a narrative from Xochitl Ortega, Administrative Director of X's & O's Educational Child Care, Young Star 5 Star Program and Nationally Accredited Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin:

My program has always been motivated to establish a system of ongoing communication that enables us to address new challenges as they arise in our program. X's & O's Educational Child Care opened twelve years ago with standards of the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) in our thoughts. We were committed to having a positive impact on the lives of others, children, families, and staff.

YoungStar began and all child care programs who were serving Wisconsin children were mandated to participate. This was necessary to continue to keep the doors open in our community. We strived to establish a connection between our NAFCC accreditation and Young Star to run an effective program.

As we look back on our journey - a journey that started out with hesitant, tentative steps, we see just how far we have progressed. It has been an honor and a privilege being part of Young Star and one which has been imbued with wonderful memories. Allow me to share a few such memories with you - memories that serve to illustrate that while some things will change and rightly so - the core fundamentals in my program will remain the same.

X's & O's Educational Child Care voluntarily applied to YoungStar immediately by submitting our application before regulations took place to begin quality care for children. I had scheduled to meet with my YoungStar Technical Consultant, Pam Kaye. During the visits we planned and evaluated the child care program for the quality improvements that were going to take place in our program to meet YoungStar guidelines. Pam, I and Estella (my assistant) began to plan and arrange how to integrate curriculum planning and implementation of our environment that was necessary for a quality, successful educational program.

We joined together and reviewed the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS) and accreditation self-observations for improvements in March 2011. Estella and I worked toward organizing the environment and curriculum planning to improve scores on our initial rating. We focused on the preliminary self-assessment study for NAFCC.

The technical assistance we received from Pam Kaye enabled our program to grow and sustain quality in our programming. We added more Spanish books to our library that allows all children to have access to literature in two languages. There was a need for a special comfort zone in the program so we worked side by side with Pam for ideas. We now have a peaceful soft, comfortable, quiet place for children who need time alone.

X's & O's Educational Child Care has modeled the way to professionalism, inspired and shaped our vision of quality child care, and voluntarily adopted improvements needed to take place in our program. We have foreseen group collaboration and individual accountability for Young Star. I genuinely care for my program's spirit to continue to grow and sustain YoungStar requirements.

X's & O's Educational Child Care is honored to have earned a Young Star 5 Star rating. Our commitment and dedication to education is a powerful thing; it suggests a commitment to ourselves, as well as a team and a healthy respect for others. Child Care is a unique place to work and we are a wonderful program that is growing along the way and at the same time having fun.